DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 080 006 FL 004 119

AUTHOR Oliverius, Zdenek F.
TITLE Componential Analysis of the Russian Case System.
INSTITUTION Monash Univ., Clayton, Victoria (Australia).
PUB DATE 70
NOTE 17p.; In Linguistic Communications, 2, 1970. Paper presented at the 13th Congress of the Austrolasian Universities Language and Literature Association, Monash University, August 12-19, 1970

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Case (Grammar); *Componential Analysis; *Descriptive Linguistics; Distinctive Features; Language Universals; Linguistic Theory; *Russian; *Semantics; Sentence Structure; Synchronic Linguistics; Syntax

ABSTRACT

The author argues that a componential analysis of Russian case desinences is possible and useful, and that it consequently deserves a place in the linguistic analysis of Contemporary Standard Russian. The two basic assumptions of the author's theory are: first, that the meaning of cases reflects primarily the relation of substantives to the action indicated by verbs (any relevance to syntax is secondary), and second, that all values of semantic variables (items within a paradigm) are subordinated to certain unifying principles and consequently are more or less homogeneous. Because of these two assumptions, the author maintains that the case system of Contemporary Standard Russian can be described as an orthogonal paradigm where each term is defined by one value of each dimension and all possible combinations of values are represented. The author summarized his observations on the primary semantic functions of Russian cases and includes the theories of several other linguists for comparison. A chart illustrating the author's orthogonal analysis of the Russian case system is provided. (Author/VM)

ED 080006

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

FL 004 119

From: Linguistic Communications; 2, 1970.

COMPONENTIAL ANALYSIS OF THE RUSSIAN CASE SYSTEM

Zdeněk F. Oliverius

This paper is intended as a contribution to the study of the semantic structure of the Contemporary Standard Russian Case System. The essay will argue that a componential analysis of Russian case desinences is possible and useful, and that it consequently deserves a place in the linguistic analysis of Contemporary Standard Russian.

1. RUSSIAN CASES

Various linguists approached the problem of cases from various points of view, restricting themselves to the morphology of declensional desinences, focussing their attention on case uses, studying the historical development of cases etc. During the last few decades a quest for the semantic structure of case systems of different languages has figured prominently in articles and books describing Indo-European and other languages.

The real differences of opinion among linguists devoting their attention to the synchronic study of cases, if one separates from mere terminological differences, are concerned with the problem of relevant semantic components, Gesamtbedeutung, etc. Some authors (Jakobson 1936 and 1958, Hjelmslev 1936-7, Mareš 1962, etc.) aim at discovering a unified meaning for each of the cases within a case system, while others

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

(Kuryłowicz 1949-1960, de Groot 1956, etc.) reject the possibility of a unified meaning and restrict themselves to enumeration and classification of the uses of cases.

One of the more recent attempts (Ch.J. Fillmore 1968) stresses two assumptions as essential to the development of the argument: the first of these being the centrality of syntax and the second one the importance of covert categories.

It is not the intention of this paper, however, to examine the history of case studies, but rather to elucidate a few points connected with the quest for sets of relevant semantic components and to devote some attention to the interconnection between the system of Russian cases on the one hand and prepositions and prefixes on the other.

2. DETERMINING THE UNIVERSE

The problem of determining the universe of a case system may seem very simple if we approach it from the plane of expression (or formally organized paradigms). But even if this approach is adopted (Jakobson 1936 and 1958, Mares 1962, etc.) some inconsistencies are likely to appear. Apart from a rather general tendency to exclude the vocative, agreement is lacking on the status of nominative which is sometimes excluded from the system on the basis of being fully unmarked. There is also no general agreement on the two genitives and two locatives in Russian.

On the other hand, if the plane of content

is made the point of departure for the study of the case system, serious porblems emerge immediately. In his study, intended as "a contribution to the study of formal and substantive syntactic universals" Ch. Fillmore (1968) argues that "the explanatory value of a universal system of deep-structure cases is of a syntactic and not (merely) a morphological nature". According to this interpretaiton the case notion comprises "a set of universal, presumably innate, concepts which identify certain types of judgements human beings are capable of making about the events that are going on around them". The case system then appears to include cases like: Agentive, Instrumental, Dative, Factitive, Locative and Objective. The enumeration ends with a remark that additional cases will surely be needed. Turning now to the question of relevancy of the universe determined in this way, perhaps the first and most obvious observation to make is that these "cases" extend far beyond the limits of case systems in traditional grammars. To say that in "18. John broke the window" the subject is an Agent and in "19. A hammer broke the window" it is an instrument,

is perhaps a statement about classes of lexemes but certainly not about cases. The interpretaiton of the case frames which may or may not accept certain verbs (see - show) is another example of assigning features, connected with case positions, to cases themselves. It is difficult to believe

that the subjects in sentences He sees - He shows are Agentive and Dative respectively. The difference alluded to is a difference in semantic components of the two verbs "see" and "show" and has nothing to do (directly) with the case system. What actually would be the Instrument or Factitive or Objective in the following Russian sentences: Он играет вальс (He is playing a waltz); Он играет первую скрипку (He plays first violin), Он играет на скрипке (He plays a violin), Он играет смычком (He is playing with a bow).

3. CASE OPPOSITIONS

The general agreement on case oppositions seems to encompass nominative, accusative and genitive. Apart from this partial consensus, however, no striking similarities in treatment of case opposition can be found in recent works on case systems. Unfortunately there are some additional differences of opinion among linguists when it comes to the semantic interpretation of case oppositions. The opposition of cas grammatical vs. cas concrets (Kuryłowicz 1949 - 1960) interpreted as contrariness of morphemes devoid of any semantic function and morphemes endowed with meaning is utterly unacceptable because the idea of empty morphemes is irreconcilable with the character of natural languages as sign systems.

Assuming that the basic opposition nominative - accusative is valid, I feel that it may serve as a basis for looking into the system of

oppositions of the Russian case system with reference to some concrete examples.

There is a certain parallelism between the oppositions nominative - genitive and accusative - genitive (чтение учеников - чтение книг: genitivus subiectivus - genitivus obiectivus) indicating a rather close relation of the three cases in Russian reflecting thus the Indo-European situation as described by Kuryłowicz (1949, 1960): "La triade des cas grammaticaux est le vrai système des cas indoéuropeens, elle en represente l'ossature, à laquelle sont attaches, d'une façon assez lache, les cas concrets". The adverbal character of both nominative and accusative as opposed to the adnominal character of the Russian genitive is not relevant synchronically.

Turning now to the opposition nominative - instrumental, perhaps the first observation to make is that they partially overlap, both indicating the originator of the aciton expressed by the verb. But for a clearer understanding of the nominative - instrumental relationship it is important to notice the restricted character of the latter:
Солдат убил его - Он был убит солдатом; Пуля убила его - Он был убит пулей; Солдат убил его пулей: Его убило пулей: Брат был болен - Брат вернулся больным; Он учитель - Он работает учителем; Казак, буйный сокол, ринулся на врага - Казак буйным соколом ринулся на врага. In all of these examples the instrumental indicates some kind of restriction. In the sentence Солдат убил его пулей the instru-

mental signifies that пуля does not participate fully in the action described, in sentences Брат вернулся больным and Он работает учителем the restriction is temporal or circumstantial. The instrumental in ergative sentences like Он был убит солдатом is in obvious connection with markers of passiveness and the shift of interlocutors' attention from the agens to the patiens.

The above rather scattered observations on the opposition nominative - instrumental are strikingly similar to what can be detected in the oppositions accusative - dative and genitive - partitive: учить стихи - учиться математике; Мама поручила детей тете Маше; Маме хочется спать; В Грузии я видел уборку чая - Я выпил чашку чаю; Он занимается производством сахара - Он купил кило сахару. The instrumental dative and partitive are marked members of the opposition limitation or restriction.

Locative, prepositional and vocative share one common feature, standing in opposition to all other cases, namely zero participation in the action expressed by predicate. The vocative and locative, for obvious reasons, do not need any further argumentation, but it may be appropriate to point out that substantives in the prepositional case in Contemporary Standard Russian are always separated from the verb by prepositions retaining at least some residual components indicating spatial, temporal etc. distance, and dissociating the substantive from the intrinsic sphere tof the action denoted by

the verb.

4. THE SYSTEM OF RUSSIAN CASES

Serious difficulties are encountered when one tries to interpret semantically the oppositions found in any particular language. Interpretations offered so far oscillate between rather abstract and very concrete notions.

R. Jakobson (1936) distinguishes four types of cases: Bezugskasus, Umfangskasus- Randkasus and Gestaltungskasus, treating the more basic elements as unmarked (the nominative is fully unmarked). It should be mentioned that Jakobson's case features are singlevalued rather than binary: each of the characteristic features is either present or absent. Later on R. Jakobson (1958) reduced the number of distinctive features essential for an adequate description of the case system in Contemporary Standard Russian from four to three "semantic marks". The cases in Russian are thus "grouped into classes each of which is characterized by the presence vs. absence of a particular semantic mark: 1) quantifiers (Genitive, Locative), focussing upon the extent to which the entity takes part in the message, vs. non-quantifiers; 2) directional cases (Accusative, Dative), signalizing the goal of an event, vs. non-directional; 3) marginal cases (Instrumetnal, Dative, Locative), assigning to the entity an accessory place in the message vs. non-marginal." Nominative is treated in much the same way as in R. Jakobson's article published in TCLP (1936) as fully unmarked.

F. Mares (1962) distinguishes between two variables aspectus and ptosis with two and three values respectively (staticus-dynamicus; recta - iungens - socians). L. Hjelmslev (1936-1937) using terms like rapprochement, repos, eloignement comes back to one rather old and often attacked but still not successfully disproved conception.

One can hardly disagree with Skalicka's (1950) assertion that all case systems suggested so far are lacking homogeneity and adequacy of criteria used for semantic classification. There are compelling reasons for asking questions like: Should all the values of semantic variables (like case) form a unified, homogeneous system? In other words should cases be viewed upon as a complex of loosely connected elements or as a cohesive system? Another question and perhaps an even more serious one that arises concerns the relation between the semantic components of cases and reality: Is there any such relation at all? What aspect of reality is reflected?

There are two assumptions I wish to make explicit: 1) The meaning of cases reflects primarily the relation of substantives to the action indicated by verbs (any relevance to syntax is secondary). 2) All values of semantic variables (items within a paradigm) are subordinated to certain unifying principles and consequently are more or less homogeneous.

If these two assumptions can be accepted, the case system of Contemporary Standard Russian can be described as orthogonal paradigm where

each term is defined by one value of each dimension and all possible combinations of values are represented. Note that orthogonal analysis, which is rather rare in less central sub-systems, is possible in the description of cases in Contemporary Standard Russian perhaps because of the undisputed centrality of cases within the whole system of Russian.

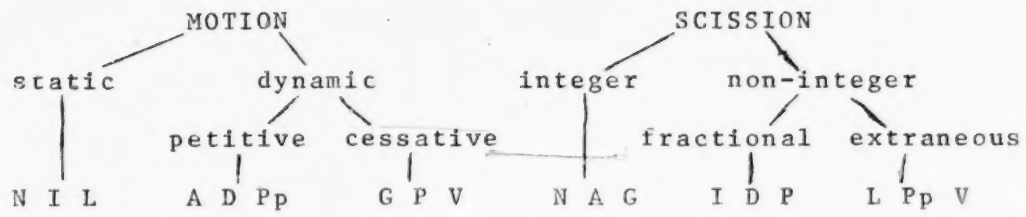
In this section I wish to summerize the observations on the primary semantic functions of Russian cases. All case oppositions in Contemporary Standard Russian are apparently organized along two axes. One of them can be described as nominative - ergative, denoting the relation of the entity (indicated by the substantive) to the action as far as motion and direction is concerned. This is the axis of the basic oppositions: nominative - accusative - genitive. In addition to this axis there is there is another one indicating to what extent the entity (expressed by the substantive)is affected, effected, etc. by the action. This is the axis of oppositions: nominative - instrumental - locative; accusative - dative - prepositional.

The degree of abstraction needed for establishing these two basic notions exceeds previous generalizations made in connection with case system analysis.

Each of the semantic variables, functioning as relevant semantic components of Russian cases, has three values. From now on I will use the terms motion and scission for the two variables.

The variable of motion encompasses the following values: static - petitive - cessative. The least marked member of these oppositions is "static" reflecting the inert, unmoved, quiescent character of the given entity, which also is the basis for the originative and locative uses. The petitive value is in direct opposition to static, conveying the meaning of affectedness, effectedness, adjunction, intention, etc. and leaving all leftover functions to the cessative value of motion, reflecting separation, disjunction, etc. Occurences of the genitive in рука брата, книга брата fall within the range of this interpretation. The variable of scission has three valeus: integer - fractional - extraneous. The least marked member of these is the first one, indicating full participation of the entity, referred to by the substantive, in the action. The non-integer fractional scission conveys the notion of partiality or peripherality, leaving the left-over function of denoting no participation in action to the non-integer extraneous scission.

The semantic structure of the case system in Contemporary Standard Russian can be described as a perfect paradigm with zero redundancy. Two trees showing the grouping of Russian cases according to different values of either motion or scission clearly indicate the possibilities of neutralization and may help to explain some developmental trends, cf. the semantic (and formal) convergency of Locative and Prepositional, Genitive and Partitive, and also the syncretism of case forms.



The full paradigm of the Russian case system assumes the following form:

CASE	MOTION	SCISSION	
Nominative	+	+	static - integer
Instrumental	+	-	static - fractional
Locative	+	o	static - extraneous
Accusative	-	+	petitive - integer
Dative	-	-	petitive - fractional
Prepositional	-	o	petitive - extraneous
Genitive	o	+	cessative - integer
Partitive	o	-	cessative - fractional
Vocative	o	o	cessative - extraneous

The high degree of abstraction allows for reconciliation of otherwise irreconcilable divergencies in interpretation of individual case uses. The explication of Nominitive as agens is incompatible with its explication as patiens, but both can be covered by the notion

of "unmoved integrity" (in the center of a message). All the main uses of Instrumental can be expressed as the "unaffected but restricted" center of a given message. The Locative, retaining the static value of motion while being fully separated from the action referred to by the verb, logically enough indicates the location where the action takes place. Some possibilities of the semantic interpretation of Accusative. Dative and Prepositional have been mentioned earlier in this paper. The cessative value of the so called Genitive ablative and Genitive in negative expressions is obvious. The so called possessive Genitive, part-whole Genitive, etc., indicate separation of an included entity: дом отца, крыша дома. The distance between Nominative and Vocative is actually smaller than it may seem from the table above. Both values constituting the semantic structure of Vocative along the axes of motion and scission are in a sense negating the dynamic and fractional values, which brings them rather close to the starting points: static and integer.

In conclusion let me return to some recent descriptions of the Russian case system and compare them with the present suggestion.

	JAKOBSON 1936				JAKOBSON 1958			MARES 1962					THE PRESENT PAPER	
	Randkasus	Bezugskasus	Umfangskasus	Gestaltungskasus	Limitational	Directional	Peripheral	Recta	Ptosis Iungens	Socians	Aspectus Staticus	Dynamicus	Motion	Scission
Nominative					o	o	o	+			+		+	+
Instrumental	+				o	o	+			+	+		+	-
Locative	+		+	+	+	o	+		+		+		+	o
Accusative		+			o	+	o	+				+	-	+
Dative	+	+			o	+	+			+		+	-	-
Prepositional	+		+		+	+	+						-	o
Genitive			+		+	+	o		+			+	o	+
Partitive			+	+	+	o	o						o	-
Vocative													o	o

The basis for comparison can be found in the semantic similarity of components utilized in each particular system. Jakobson's Bezugskasus and directional, Mares's aspectus dynamicus correspond with the petitive motion: Jakobson's Randkasus and peripheral non-limitational, and Mares's ptosis recta are comparable to the fractional scission. Jakobson's Umfangskasus (not coinciding with

Randcasus) and limitational non-peripheral correspond with the cessative motion (there is no counterpart in Mares's system). The rest is only partially overlapping. There are very few incompatible differences between the present system and Jakobson's (1958)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bendix, E. H. 1966. Componential analysis of general vocabulary: The semantic structure of a set of verbs in English, Hindi, and Japanese. The Hague: Mouton & Co.

Berneker, E. 1924. Slavisches etymologische Worterbuch. Heidelberg.

Breal, M. Semantics: Studies in the science of meaning. New York: Dover Publications.

Cairns, Ch. E. (1969. Markedness, neutralization and universal redundancy rules. Language 45, 863 - 885

Colby, B. N. 1966. Ethnographic semantic: A preliminary survey. Current Anthropology 7, No. 1.

Diver, W. 1964. The system of agency of the Latin noun. Word 20, 178 - 196

Ebeling, C. L. 1955. On the meaning of the Russian cases. Amsterdam: Analecta Slavica.

Erhart, A. 1967. Zur Ie. Nominalflexion. Sbornik praci filosoficke fakulty brnenske university J. E. Purkyne. Rada jazykovedna (A) 16, 7 - 26.

Fillmore, Ch. 1966. Towards a modern theory of case. The Ohio State University project on linguistic analysis. Report No. 13, 1 - 24.

- 1968. The case for case. Universals in Linguistic Theory. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1 - 88.

Goodenough, W. H. 1956, Componential analysis and the study of meaning. Language 32, 195 - 216.

de Groot, A. W. 1956. Classification of cases and cuses of cases. For Roman Jakobson. The Hague.

- Classification of uses of a case illustrated on the genitive in Latin. Lingua 6, 8 - 66.

Hjelmslev, L. 1935, 1937. La categorie des cas, 1 - 2, Acta Jutlandica 7, 9.

- 1961 Prolegomena to a theory of language. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Jakobson, R. 1936. Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre: Gesamtbedeutungen der russischen Kasus. Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague, 6, 240 - 288.

- 1958. Морфологические наблюдения над славянский склонением: Состав русских падежных форм. American contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavicists. The Hague: Mouton and Co. 127 - 156.

- 1965. Quest for the essence of language. Diogenes: An International Review of Philosophy and Humanistic Studies, 51, 21 - 37.

Karcevskij, S. 1929. Du dualisme asymetrique du signe linguistique. Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague, 1, 88 - 93.

Kuryłowicz, J. 1960. Le probleme du classement des cas. Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa

Jezykoznawczego 9 (1949), 20 - 43; Esquisses linguistiques. Wrocław - Krakow.

- 1962. Проблема классификации падежей. Очерки по лингвистике. Москва.

- 1964. The inflectional categories of Indo-European, Heidelberg. Universitatsverlag.

Lamb, S. M. 1965. Kinship terminology and linguistic structure. American Anthropologist 67, 37 - 64.

Lockwood, D. G. 1969. Markedness in stratificational phonology. Language 45, 300 - 308.

Lounsbury, F. G. 1956. A semantic analysis of the Pawnee kinship usage. Language 32, 158 - 194.

Нареш, В. Ф. 1962. Ранний период морфологического развития славянского склонения. Вопросы языкознания 11. №6, 13 - 21

Оливериус, З. Ф. 1967. Морфемный анализ современного русского языка. Проблемы современной лингвистики. Прага.

- A model of morphemic description of Russian words. Proceedings of the Symposium of Algebraic Linguistics (Smolenice). To appear.

Преображенский, А. Г. 1910 - 1916. Этимологический словарь русского языка, Москва.

de Saussure, F. 1966. Course in general linguistics. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Skalicka, V. 1950, Poznamky k teorii padu. Slovo a slovesnost 12, 134 - 152.

Stankiewicz, E. 1968. Declension and gradation of Russian substantives. The Hague.

Townsend, Ch. E. 1968. Russian word-formation. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company.

Trager, G. L. 1953. Russian declensional morphemes. Language 29, 326 - 338.

Vallant, A. 1936. L'ergatif indo-europeen. Bulletin de la Societe de linguistique de Paris 27, 93 - 108.

Vasmer, M. 1950 - 1958. Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. Heidelberg.

Виноградов, В. В. 1947. Русский язык: Грамматическое учение о слове. Москва.

Weinreich, U. 1963. On the semantic structure of language. Universals of language. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T.

Worth, D. S. et al. Russian Derivation Dictionary preprint.